

10 THE OUTBREAK THE WORLD

PANDEMIC WATCH



During a drive in Karachi. Reuters

PAKISTAN
Scope of CPEC to be 'enhanced in 2nd phase'

Islamabad: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is at the cusp of launching its second phase to add more sectors like agriculture and tourism, a senior official has said, rejecting reports that the project is slowing down due to the outbreak. China has committed to invest over \$60 billion in Pakistan as part of the CPEC under which it planned to build a number of special economic zones. Asim Saleem Bajwa, chairman CPEC Authority, in a tweet on Wednesday rejected reports about the adverse impact of the coronavirus on CPEC projects.

YEMEN
Saudi coalition starts unilateral virus ceasefire

Riyadh: The Saudi-led coalition began a unilateral ceasefire in Yemen's long war on Thursday, saying it hoped the initiative to prevent coronavirus in the impoverished country would lead to a wider political solution. The Iran-backed Huthi rebels have not made any comment on the coalition's declaration of a two-week pause in the five-year conflict that took effect from 0900 GMT. If the ceasefire does hold, it would be the first breakthrough since the warring parties agreed to a UN-brokered ceasefire in the port city of Hodeida during talks in Sweden in late 2018.

AUSTRALIA
Police raid ship at centre of virus outbreak

Sydney: Police wearing protective gear boarded a cruise ship to seize evidence and question crew members of the vessel linked to hundreds of coronavirus infections and 15 deaths across Australia. About 2,700 passengers disembarked from the ship on March 19 in Sydney and it has since become the largest source of coronavirus infections in Australia. More than 600 cases of COVID-19 and 15 deaths are linked to the ship, the Ruby Princess. About 200 crew have shown symptoms of COVID-19, while 18 have tested positive.

OVER 1.5 MILLION VIRUS CASES and 90,000 deaths reported worldwide

BASELESS ACCUSATIONS of cover-up, claims China

VICTIMS OF UNFAIR TREATMENT are the Taiwanese: Tsai Ing-wen

Faced racist slurs from Taiwan: WHO chief

Taiwan protests accusation, calls for Tedros to clarify, apologise to country

Tedros politicising pandemic, siding with China, says Trump

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TAIPEI, APRIL 9

TAIWAN'S FOREIGN ministry on Thursday strongly protested accusations from the head of the World Health Organisation that the self-governing island was linked to and condoned racist personal attacks on him. A ministry statement expressed "strong dissatisfaction and a high degree of regret" with WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus' remarks at a press briefing in Geneva on Wednesday. It requested he "immediately correct his unfounded allegations, immediately clarify, and apologise to our country."

At the press briefing, Tedros vocally defended himself and the UN health agency's response to the coronavirus pandemic. He accused Taiwan's foreign ministry of being linked to a months-long campaign against him and said that since the emergence of the new coronavirus, he has been personally attacked, including receiving at times, death threats and racist abuse. "This attack came from Taiwan," said Tedros, a former Ethiopian health and foreign minister and the WHO's first African leader.

He said Taiwanese diplomats were aware of the attacks but did not dissociate themselves from



Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen at a military camp in Tainan on Thursday. Reuters

them. "They even started criticising me in the middle of all those insults and slurs," Tedros said. "I say it today because it's enough." The basis of his allegations was unclear. President Tsai Ing-wen also weighed in, saying on Facebook that Taiwan does not condone the use of racist remarks to attack those with different opinions. "If Director-General Tedros could withstand pressure from China and come to Taiwan to see

Taiwan's efforts to fight COVID-19 for himself, he would be able to see that the Taiwanese people are the true victims of unfair treatment," she wrote, referring to Taiwan's exclusion from the WHO at China's insistence. "I believe that the WHO will only truly be complete if Taiwan is included." Tedros was elected with the strong support of China, one of five permanent veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council and which claims Taiwan

as its own territory. He has firmly backed Beijing's claims to have been open and transparent about the outbreak, despite strong evidence that it suppressed early reports on infections. Taiwan has one of the most robust public health systems, and has won praise for its handling of the outbreak. Despite its close proximity to China and the frequency of travel between the sides, Taiwan has reported just 379 cases and five deaths.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, BEIJING, APR 9

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump has fired a fresh salvo at the World Health Organisation, accusing its chief of siding with China and "politicising" the pandemic while repeating his threat to freeze the agency's funding. Trump's allegation comes a day after the US President threatened to put a "very powerful" hold on US funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and criticised it for having "missed the call" in its response to the pandemic.

The president's fresh allegation comes after WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus cautioned against politicisation of COVID-19 and said that such a move will only result in "many more body bags". Hours later at the White House conference, Trump agreed COVID-19 should not be politicised, but alleged that the WHO chief was doing exactly that and was siding with China. "When he (Ghebreyesus) says politicising, he's politicising. That shouldn't be. We spend \$450 million last year, hundreds of millions in previ-

AFRICAN LEADERS RALLY AROUND TEDROS

SOUTH AFRICAN president Cyril Ramaphosa said the WHO chief had shown "exceptional leadership... from the very earliest stages of this global health crisis"



RWANDAN LEADER Paul Kagame said the WHO chief "has the full confidence and support of Africa," while AU Commission head Moussa Faki urged leaders to focus on fighting COVID-19

AFRICA ACCOUNTS for a fraction of global cases, but its countries are feeling the impact with economies expected to contract, putting about 20 million jobs at risk

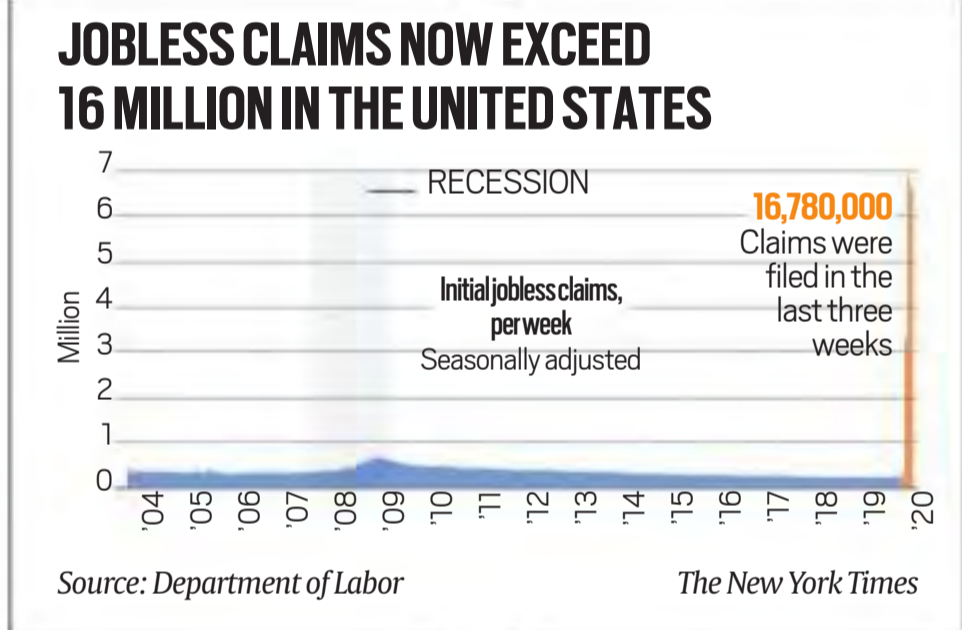
ous years. And they got to do better than that. They got to do better. When you talk about politics, I can't believe he's talking about politics look at the relationship they have to China," Trump said. China on Thursday denied any cover-up in reporting the initial information of the outbreak as it put up a staunch defence of Ghebreyesus. "China was the first country to report the COVID-19 to the WHO, (and) that doesn't mean the virus originated from

Wuhan," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here. "Epidemic may break out first anywhere in the world. But its origin is a matter of science and we should leave it to science and medical community," said Zhao. "Accusation of China covered up the epidemic and lack of transparency is groundless," Zhao said, adding that China had informed WHO of the genetic sequence of the virus which was used by American labs.

US jobless roll rises by 6.6 mn; NY death count hits new high

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, APRIL 9

ANOTHER 6.6 million people filed for unemployment benefits last week as the coronavirus outbreak continued its devastating march through the American economy, the Labor Department reported on Thursday. With astonishing swiftness, the pandemic has shut down both longstanding and new businesses, leaving veteran workers and recent hires in nearly every type of industry without a paycheck. In just three weeks, more than 16 million Americans have lost their jobs. Many Wall Street analysts concede that at this point, forecasts are not much more than gussied-up guesses: The purposeful and sudden halt in economic activity has no precedent,



and no one knows when the restrictions on movement and commerce will be lifted. New York state set another single-day record of COVID-19 deaths. The number of known infections in New York state alone approached 150,000. Nearly 430,000 cases of

COVID-19, the highly infectious lung disease caused by the coronavirus, were confirmed in the US as of Wednesday afternoon, including over 14,700 deaths. For the second straight day the virus killed at least 1,900 in a 24-hour period. Cuomo said 779 people had died in the past day in his state.



IN THE NEW WORLD

Nurses hold newborn babies wearing protective face shields during the outbreak at a hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, on Thursday. Reuters

UK death toll up by 881; PM 'makes positive steps'

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, APRIL 9

BRITAIN ON Thursday reported 881 more fatalities due to COVID-19, bringing the country's total toll to 7,978, as Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the strict lockdown measures in place in the UK must continue for more time to ensure there is no second wave. Raab, who is deputising for Prime Minister Boris Johnson while he is in hospital recovering from COVID-19, confirmed that the premier's condition continues to improve.

"The Prime Minister remains in intensive care, but he continues to make positive steps forwards and is in good spirits," said Raab. The senior Cabinet minister revealed another record increase in the daily coronavirus related death toll of 881 to hit 7,978 as he urged the British public to continue to follow the government's social distancing guidance. After chairing an emergency Cobra committee meeting earlier on Thursday, Raab said the early signs suggest all the lockdown measures are having an impact but it is too early to say that "conclusively". PTI

BANGLADESH

Rohingya camps under 'complete lockdown'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COX'S BAZAR, APRIL 9

BANGLADESH HAS imposed a "complete lockdown" in Cox's Bazar district — home to over a million Rohingya refugees from neighbouring Myanmar — to halt the spread of coronavirus, officials said Thursday. Experts have warned the disease could spread quickly through the cramped, sewage-soaked alleys where the persecuted Muslim minority are housed in canvas and bamboo shacks. With the official number of cases doubling to more than 200

EXPLAINED
Refugee camps vulnerable to coronavirus outbreak

REFUGEE CAMPS such as the one in Myanmar are considered particularly vulnerable to the outbreak. One reason is because of the sheer volume of people living in congested space, making social distancing difficult. The situation is exacerbated by the poor medical facilities and lack of protective gear in such camps. Internet ban in the Bangladesh camp has also led to the spread of rumours and difficulty in accessing accurate information.

nationwide in the last five days, officials ordered a lockdown from late Wednesday. The area "will be put under

complete lockdown — no entry, no exit — until the situation improves", the directive said. Police and soldiers set up

roadblocks in the district, home to 3.4 million people including the Rohingya refugees, and were conducting patrols inside and around the camps on Thursday. Refugee commissioner Mahbub Alam Talukder said movement restrictions on aid workers had also been imposed. "Only emergency food supply and medical services can continue work in the camps by maintaining extreme caution," he told AFP. Anyone with a recent history of travel abroad would also be prevented from entering the camps until they completed a quarantine, he added.

UNSC to meet over outbreak, discuss global ceasefire

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

AS THE United Nations Security Council meets in the wee hours of Friday to discuss the pandemic for the first time — after weeks of differences between the US and China — it will be considering two sets of texts for resolution. Proposed by France, the first text focuses on United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres's call last month to cease hostilities around the world as part of a "humanitarian pause" to fight the pandemic. It has been supported by all permanent members of the UNSC. And the second text has been spearheaded by Tunisia on behalf of the 10 non-permanent members and calls for "an urgent, coordinated and united international action to curb the impact of COVID-19" and urges an immediate global ceasefire on humanitarian grounds. Spearheaded by Germany, nine of the UNSC's 10 non-permanent members had requested the closed-door meeting -- a video conference -- last week. This meeting could not be held earlier since Washington and Beijing were at loggerheads, with the Trump administration had insisted on referring to the virus as originating from China. At the UNSC meeting, Guterres is expected to brief on efforts to fight the pandemic, peacekeeping missions and push for unity in the international community. The UNSC President for the month of April, the Dominican Republic has formally scheduled the video conference. WITH PTI INPUTS

OTHER TOP GLOBAL STORIES

Damascus slams 'misleading' chemical arms watchdog report

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DAMASCUS, APRIL 9

THE SYRIAN government on Thursday criticised as "misleading" a report by the global chemical weapons watchdog that for the first time blamed Damascus for toxic attacks in 2017. "The report of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on the use of poisonous substances in the town of Latamneh in 2017 is misleading and contains falsified and fabricated conclusions



Bashar al-Assad

aimed at falsifying truths and accusing the Syrian government," the foreign ministry said. The OPCW findings published Wednesday accused President Bashar al-Assad's air force of using the nerve gas sarin and chlorine three times in 2017 on that town in northwest Syria. The Syrian government said it

rejected the contents of the report. Damascus "absolutely denies ever having used poisonous gases in the town of Latamneh or in any other Syrian city or village," the statement said. Wednesday's report was the first from a new investigative team set up by the OPCW to identify the perpetrators of attacks in Syria's nine-year-old civil war. It said two Syrian Arab Air Force Sukhoi SU-22 jet fighters dropped two bombs containing sarin on Latamneh on March 24 and 30, 2017.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BAGHDAD, APRIL 9

IRAQI PRESIDENT Barham Saleh nominated spy chief Mustafa Kadhemi on Thursday as the country's third prime minister-designate this year, moments after his predecessor ended his bid to form a government. Kadhemi, the 53-year-old head of the National Intelligence Service, has ascended to the role as Iraq faces a budget crisis brought on by the collapse in world oil prices and the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"This is a huge responsibility, and a difficult task," said Saleh in his nominating speech, describing Kadhemi as someone with integrity and reason. His nomination was attended by ministers, political rivals and even the United Nations' representative in Iraq, indicating widespread support for Kadhemi that neither of the previous PM-designates had enjoyed. Moments before the ceremony, his predecessor Adnan Zurfai announced he was withdrawing his candidacy due to "internal and external reasons," without elaborating.

Pak asks Afghanistan to hand over mastermind of gurdwara attack

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 9

PAKISTAN ON Thursday asked Afghanistan to hand over the chief of the Islamic State's Khorasan unit, Aslam Farooqi, the mastermind behind a deadly terror attack on a prominent gurdwara in Kabul last month. A heavily armed Islamic State-Khorasan suicide bomber stormed the gurdwara in the heart of Afghanistan's capital on March 25, killing 25 Sikhs and injuring eight others.



The attack killed 25. Reuters/File

Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security had said Farooqi, also known as Abdullah Orakzai, was arrested along with 19 other commanders.

"The ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan was called to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conveyed Pakistan's views with regard to the arrest of ISIS-K leader, Aslam Farooqi, by the Afghan authorities on April 5, 2020," a statement issued by the Foreign Office said here. "It was underscored to the ambassador that since Farooqi was involved in anti-Pakistan activities in Afghanistan, he should be handed over to Pakistan for further investigations," the statement added. PTI